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NAMRU-3 Change of Command Ceremony Highlights the Importance of Collaboration

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By Denise Alford, NAMRU-3 public affairs officer



Vice Adm. Forrest Faison delivers remarks during a change of command ceremony held at U.S. Naval Medical Research Unit 3 in Cairo, Egypt. During the ceremony, Capt. Andrew Vaughn relieved Capt. John Gilstad as commanding officer, U.S. Naval Medical Research Unit 3. An integral part of Navy Medicine's research and development, U.S. Naval Medical Research Unit 3 is one of three overseas infectious disease and surveillance activities. (Official U.S. Navy photo/Released)

CAIRO, Egypt- The U.S. Naval Medical Research Unit 3 (NAMRU-3), held a change of command (CoC) ceremony in Cairo, Egypt, Sept. 27.

Capt. Andrew F. Vaughn, assumed command of NAMRU-3 relieving Capt. John R-H. Gilstad.

During his time as commanding officer of NAMRU-3, Gilstad directed over 40 research projects, spanning 23 countries. Vice Adm. Forrest Faison, Navy surgeon general and chief, U.S. Navy Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, presented Gilstad the Legion of Merit medal on behalf of the President of the United States.

Gilstad's noteworthy accomplishments garnered the respect and praise from colleagues all over the world including the Honorable R. Stephen Beecroft, Ambassador, United States Embassy, Arab Republic of Egypt.

"As the senior officer and leader of NAMRU-3, Capt. Gilstad's contributions to health science and diplomacy are deeply appreciated in Egypt and the U.S.," Beecroft said.

Gilstad addressed NAMRU-3 personnel and guests, leaving words of encouragement to the staff he led for the past two years.

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“We must seek out our niche in this complicated environment, working together so that our future may be as illustrious as our past,” Gilstad said.

Gilstad’s next assignment is the Armed Forces Radiobiology Research Institute at the Uniformed Services University in Bethesda, Maryland.

Vaughn officially assumed command of the Department of Defense’s largest and longest continuously operating overseas medical research laboratory. He praised the dedication and hard work of the staff, echoing Gilstad’s comments on the importance of collaboration.

“Without the support and collaboration of our hosts, we could not perform our mission,” Vaughn said.

Guest speakers, Beecroft; Faison; and Amr Kandeel, doctor, First Undersecretary of Health for preventative medicine, Egyptian Ministry of Health and Population, Arab Republic of Egypt, all emphasized the essential aspects of collaboration in their remarks.

Beecroft acknowledged the value of those relationships and applauded the cooperation between Egyptian and NAMRU-3 scientists.

“Collaboration and stability have characterized NAMRU-3’s partnership with Egypt for almost 60 years,” Beecroft said. “Scientists collaborate across borders and create global networks dedicated to mutual understanding, sharing information and problem solving.”

Kandeel provided a clear example of the significance of the collaborative partnership between NAMRU-3 and the Egyptian Ministry of Health and Population.

“NAMRU-3 has been our partner in many successful programs in different aspects of health promotion and disease prevention and control. This aspect of our continuous cooperation proved to be a source of strength and stability in the Egyptian and American relationship especially in the field of health service,” said Kandeel.

At NAMRU-3, there are 41 Egyptian scientists working alongside their U.S. military and civilian counterparts in various areas of medical and research based programs.

NAMRU-3’s mission is to conduct infectious disease research including the evaluation of vaccines, therapeutic agents, diagnostic assays and vector control measures and to carry out public health activities aimed toward improved disease surveillance and outbreak response assistance in Africa, the Middle East and Southwest Asia.

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